

## Collection of June's stories

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### Story 1



This is my Bedouin friend Aziza Husein Suwaed. She is part of the Suwaed Bedouin tribe that lives in the Galilee in Israel near the city of Carmiel. I met Aziza in 1988, when I moved into a small village on the hill opposite her. She was my neighbor, and one day I took my baby daughter and just went to visit her. I knew a little Arabic and she knew a little Hebrew and this is how we became friends. Above our heads in the picture is a grape vine, from which we ate delicious grapes that day. In the background you can see a shed where Aziza's family holds hay for their cows and horse.

## Story2



This is Aziza's family's summer hut. When it is very hot inside of their home, they come outside to sit in this summer hut. It is built out of long canes of wood and you get a very nice breeze sitting inside on the rugs they have put there.

Aziza is married to Achmed. They have 11 children today. This picture was taken in 1991 when they only had 4. My children, my friend's daughter, and I are sitting next to Achmed's father. He is grinding coffee beans in the traditional way. He beats the coffee beans in a special rhythm and sings a special song while beating. The jar is made out of wood and is decorated with metal artwork. On the left, you can see the mattresses the family has put out in the hut so they can sleep there at night and stay cool.

### Story 3



Here we are in Aziza's "living room" eating. The woman dressed in black is Achmed's mother Nafla, and the man with the turquoise shirt is Achmed, Aziza's husband. Bedouins always sit, eat and drink on the floor. They spread out very comfortable mattresses for you to sit on, and you eat from public dishes set out for everyone. You can get a fork and knife if you ask for it, but most of the time you scoop the food up with the pita bread. You can see a pile of pita bread on the dish (just jutting off the white tablecloth they have spread out for the meal). Hanging on the wall are the grandparents' robes. As you can see, the Bedouins of the Galilee do not live in tents. They build houses made out of stone and sheets of metal.

## Story 4



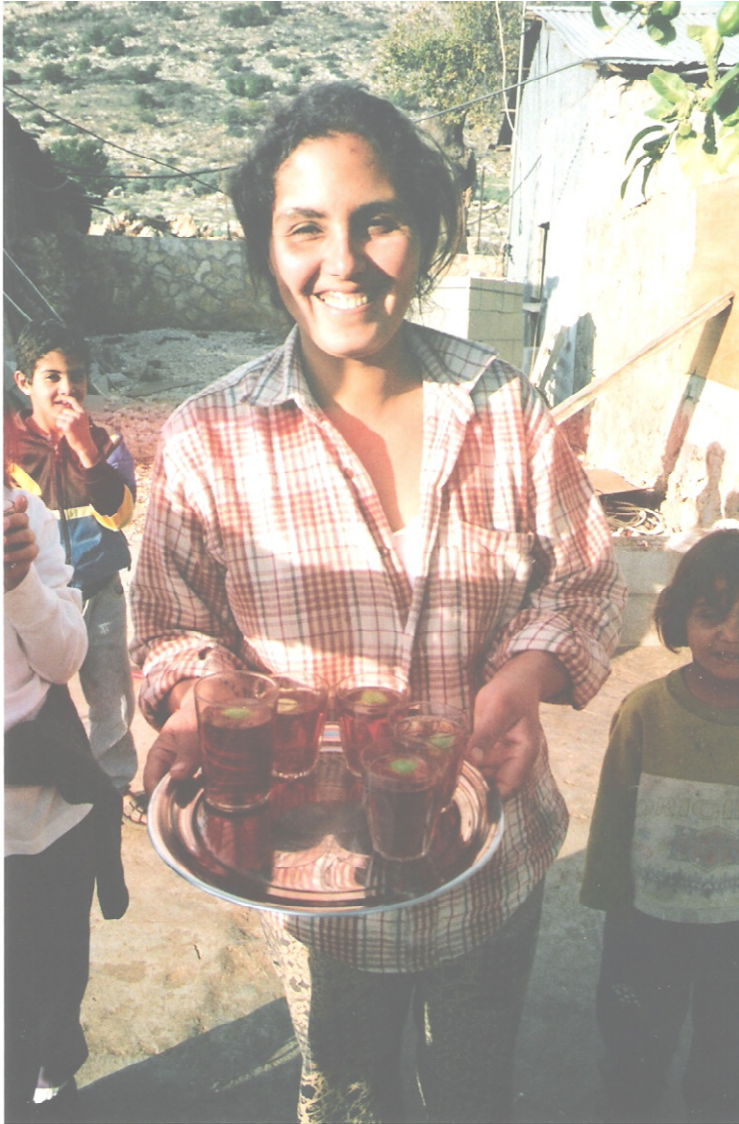
This is my daughter Talia and Aziza's daughter Darweed, standing under the family's lemon tree, which is right by their house. They have put some stuff that was on the patio up in the tree because they had just washed the patio. You can see building materials in the back, Achmed is preparing to add on another room to the house.

## Story 5

Here is Otman, Aziza's fifth child. He is ten years old in this picture and is already herding the family sheep and goats near the house. The family has many sheep and goats. They milk the goats every day. They make special cheese out of the goats' milk, and sell their wool every season. Today it is the middle children's job to milk them three times a day. They are between 4-10 years old. I have seen them do this, and they have a ball, jumping on, over and behind the animals, who are all very patient and loving with them. It is a very happy time.



## Story 6



Here is Aziza serving tea to us. The Bedouins are very well known for their hospitality and always stop what they are doing to welcome you to their home. Their pace of life is slow and calm, and they have lots of "sitting together and talking" time, even amongst themselves. She has put slices of lemon from the lemon tree in the sweet tea. Some of her children and my daughter Talia are in the picture too.

## Story 7



Here is Talia teaching a circle game to Aziza's children, my nephew and my Israeli friend's daughter.

## Story 8



I would like to describe how Aziza makes bread for her family. Everyday she bakes around 20-40 pita breads for her eleven children and husband. She first makes the dough by herself from flour and water and other ingredients, creating little balls out of it. She puts all the dough balls in a metal basin and covers them with a clean cloth, so that they will rise. After the dough has risen, she spreads out a big sheet and brings out a rolling pin and a flat board. She quickly and deftly rolls out the 40 balls to round flat pita and puts each one on the sheet. After she has finished rolling out all of the balls, and putting them on the sheet, she folds them all up in the sheet and takes the pitas outside to the "taboun" to bake them. A taboun is a black metal oven where a fire is made and the pita doughs are put on to bake. It is somewhat like how you would bake a pizza in America, only the oven is outside and smaller. It has a round turning sheet, where the pitas are put.

## Story 9

This is a picture of my last visit in Jan 2006 to visit Aziza and her grown family.



The latest addition is Racha, the baby on her lap. Notice the horse saddle on the wall. The Bedouins prize their animals greatly. I once looked at their family photo album, and all the pictures were of their livestock

and horses! Notice the cat in Otman's arms. In front you can see their winter stove which is a small metal holder for hot coals. Here are all of the children's names starting from Ismael who is 16, Fawza 15, Fatma 14, Darweed 13, Otman 12, Shamsa 11, Mustafa 9, Aisha 8, Eti 7, Ali 3 and Racha 11 months. I love them all dearly. They are one of the warmest loving families I have ever met in my life!

## Story 10

In my last visit in January 2006, I asked to take a picture with the children and Aziza on my last evening with them. I had been sitting quietly with them all around the stove in the family room, keeping warm on a rainy winter night. I am always sad to part, but always happy when I return. I write them letters and send them packages from America. We correspond in Hebrew. Achmed knows Hebrew well, and Aziza has learnt a lot of Hebrew over the years.

On the right in the picture is all of their bedding piled up in the corner of the room. They take it out at night to sleep. All the boys sleep in one room and all the girls in another. They each go to sleep when they are tired, there are no designated bedtimes for anyone. During the day, when someone is tired, he will just lay down on one of the mattresses against the wall in the family room. All the older children take care of the younger ones. I have noticed over the years that the current baby in the family gets tons of attention and love heaped on him or her. It is like the baby is everyone's joy. Each child loves to be deemed capable to take on some responsibility. Ismael and Fawza are the oldest, and they are the babysitters if Aziza and Achmed want to go out somewhere. Fawza, Fatma and Darweed do a lot of the cooking in the kitchen. Eti, Aisha, Otman and Shamsa are responsible to milk the goats. Ali and Racha still play and fight with each other occasionally. Ali is thought to have the spirit of a revered ancestor because he looks very much like him. He is also exceptionally intelligent and curious.



## Story 11

Here is Ismael, the oldest son, in Jan 2006, with Aziza in the family room. He is wearing my son Matan's clothes, that I sent from America.



## Story 12

I am having a great time with my friends. The children are enthralled by my antics! Achmed has an eye infection so he looks a bit severe, but he is normally a very happy, content, friendly man. Every time I call and ask him how are things, he always says "Hamdullelah", which means "Praise Allah". He means that everything is fine. He told me in our last phone conversation in June 2006 that he bought two female camels! One is a mother, and the other is a younger female! He rides them for short periods of time, training them to tolerate other riders besides him.



## Story 13



This picture was taken in 2004 on another visit back to Israel. Aziza and I are hugging for the camera, and the children around are Otman, Shamsa and baby Ali. Notice the television in the background. They watched a lot of Arab television up until this past year when they got a satellite and could get Israeli TV too. Achmed is in the background, just coming in from Arabbe (a neighboring Arab town) where he goes to the open market. Everyone takes their shoes off when they enter the home.

## Story 14



This is the road to Aziza and Achmed's house. They have planted an entire olive grove, of over 100 trees. They collect the olives and take them to an olive press to have oil made from them. As you can see, the earth is very brown and rich in the Galilee. Around their house, they also grow vegetables such as tomatoes, bamia, parsley, cucumbers, peas, string beans, mint, eggplants, and green peppers. They bring water to their house in a big water tank, that they fill up in a neighboring town. Aziza was very happy to acquire a washing machine a few years ago, for all the clothing that is washed daily in her household!